

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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EXDIS

E O 11652: NGDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, IS, AU, US

SUBJECT: TRANSIT OF JEWISH EMIGRANTS FROM SOVIET UNION

REF: STATE 241934

1. DCM AND POL COUNSELOR TALKED TO GOI OFFICIALS
(PM'S OFFICE -LEVAMON: MFA- EVRON, DAFMI) NOV 8 FOR
GENERAL UPDATING ON ISRAELI THINKING ON POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
ARISING FROM INCREASED NUMBER OF JEWISH EMIGRANTS FROM
USSR. FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF ISRAELI VIEWS.

2. ISRAELIS DO NOT EXPECT ANY IMMEDIATE SHARP UPSURGE IN
NUMBERS OF SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRANTS. THEY ARE GOING ON
ASSUMPTION THAT SOVIETS WILL NOT MAKE EMIGRATION MUCH EASIER
UNTIL U.S. "DELIVERS" TRADE BILL, AT WHICH TIME, PERHAPS IN
EARLY 1975, EMIGRATION FIGURES SHOULD PROVIDE AN INDICATION
OF TREND.

3. ISRAELIS ALSO BELIEVE THAT EVEN AT "BENCHMARK" RATE OF
5,000 PER MONTH, CURRENT AUSTRIAN TRANSIT FACILITIES ARE TECH-
NICALLY ADEQUATE TO HANDLE POTENTIAL INCREASE THROUGH FASTER
TURNOVER. (THEY POINT OUT THAT 4,000 TRANSITED VIENNA
IN OCTOBER 1973.)

4. WE WERE TOLD THAT THOUGH GOI IS AWARE THAT SUTRAISNS HAVE
BEEN EXPRESSING MISGIVINGS ABOUT HANDLING LARGER NUMBERS, GOA
HAS NOT APPROACHED ISRAELIS DIRECTLY AS THEY HAVE IN PAST WHEN

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OTHER KINDS OF PROBLEMS AROSE, AS OVER SECURITY, NOISE,

ETC. WHILE ISRAELIS COULD NOT AGREE THAT VIENNA FACILITIES WOULD BE INADEQUATE TO HANDLE FLOW OF UP TO 5,000/MONTH, THEY SAID THEY WOULD NOT REQUEST AUSTRIA TO PROVIDE MORE FACILITIES TO HANDLE ANY INCREASE IN NUMBERS. ISRAELIS ARE CLEARLY AWARE THAT IN ADDITION TO PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES, PROBLEM IS ALSO A POLITICAL ONE FOR AUSTRIANS. AT SAME TIME, THEY EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT AND REGRET THAT KREISKY HAD PUBLICLY AIRED PROBLEM IN HIS NOV 7 STATEMENT. ISRAELIS FEEL VERY STRONGLY THAT WHOLE EMIGRATION IS GREATLY EASED BY MINIMUM PUBLICITY.

5. ISRAELIS APPEAR TO BE CONFIDENT THAT SATISFACTORY MEANS CAN BE FOUND TO HANDLE INCREASE, EVEN IF AUSTRIAN FACILITIES WERE TO BECOME OVERTAXED. THEY NOTED GOI HAD PRESSED HARD DURING MACOVESCU VISIT TO RE-OPEN ROMANIAN ROUTE (TEL AVIV 5276). ROMANIAN HAD NOT ACTUALLY SAID NO IN SO MANY WORDS BUT ISRAELIS HAVE NO HOPES THAT BUCHAREST ROUTE WOULD BE REOPENED. HOWEVER, ISRAELIS THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE (A) TRANSIT THROUGH OTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, E.G., NETHERLANDS (B) EITHER DIRECT FLIGHTS FROM THE USSR TO ISRAEL, OR "INDIRECT- FLIGHTS WITH A SYMBOLIC "FUEL STOP" SOMEWHERE, SHOULD SOVIETS INSIST. ISRAELIS THINK COUNTRIES OTHER THAN AUSTRIA SHOULD AND WOULD PROVIDE TRANSIT FACILITIES IF ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. ISRAELIS WOULD MUCH PREFER INTRODUCTION OF DIRECT FLIGHTS, HOWEVER, AS BEING SIMPLER, FASTER AND PROBABLY CHEAPER.

6. IN DISCUSSING OBSTACLES TO INSTITUTING DIRECT FLIGHTS, ISRAELIS SAID THAT EVERYTHING REALLY DEPENDS ON SOVIET AGREEMENT, MAKING THE POINT THIS IS A POLITICAL ISSUE. IF SOVIETS AGREED, ISRAELIS ARE CONFIDENT THAT TECHNICAL PROBLEMS COULD BE SOLVED EASILY. FOR EXAMPLE, IF SOVIETS WANTED TO USE AEROFLOT, THAT WOULD BE OKAY. ISRAELIS HAVE CONVEYED TO SOVIETS THAT THEY WANT TO BE FLEXIBLE ON ANY AIR ARRANGEMENTS AND EVEN HAVE OFFERED TO OFFSET FOREIGN EXCHANGE COSTS THAT MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN USING FOREIGN AIRLINES. IF AIRLINES MIGHT BE RELUCTANT TO FLY FOR FEAR OF TERRORIST REPRISALS, ISRAELIS WOULD BE MORE THAN WILLING TO USE EL AL OR FORM A LESS OBVIOUS COMPANY FOR THIS PARTICULAR PURPOSE. (SUGGESTION WAS NEW COMPANY MIGHT BE FIRST TO FLY LIBERIAN FLAG*) APART FROM GENERAL SOVIET RELUCTANCE TO FACILITATE EMIGRATION, ISRAELIS BELIEVE

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PRINCIPAL PROBLEM IS SOVIET SENSITIVITY TO HIGHER VISIBILITY OF DIRECT AIR TRAVEL TO ISRAEL IN LIGHT OF THEIR MID EAST DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES. SOVIETS APPEAR BELIEVE PRESENT PRACTICE OF TRAIN TRAVEL TO VIENNA AND AIR ONWARD TO ISRAEL IS LESS VULNERABLE TO CRITICISM THAT SOVIETS ARE SIDING ARABS' ENEMIES.

7. COMMENT: DISCUSSIONS WITH THESE OFFICIALS WAS FOLLOW-UP IN GREATER DETAIL OF EARLIER CONVERSATION AMB HAD WITH

FORMIN ALLON ON SUBJECT DURING COURSE OF SECRETARY RECENT VISIT. ISRAELIS SEEM TO UNDERSTAND PROBLEMS OF TRANSIT/TRANSPORT OF GREATER NUMBERS OF SOVIET JEWS AND APPEAR CONFIDENT OF SOLUTIONS WITHOUT ASKING AUSTRIA FOR "MORE HELP." IT DEPENDS ON HOW "HELP" IS INTERPRETED, HOWEVER.

8. ISRAELIS CLEARLY INTEND TO USE CURRENT AUSTRIAN FACILITIES TO EXTENT POSSIBLE IN HANDLING INCREASED IMMIGRANT FLOW. IF SOVIETS REFUSE TO ALLOW JEWS TO FLY TO ISRAEL FROM USSR AND GIVEN LACK OF ROMANIAN OPTIONS AND PROBLEMS OF OPENING NEW TRANSIT CENTERS IN WEST, THIS PROBABLY WOULD MEAN DRAMATIC INCREASE OF NUMBERS TRANSITING AUSTRIA. FROM ISRAELI POINT OF VIEW THIS IS TECHNICAL AND REPRESENTS NO "INCREASE" IN AUSTRIAN CONTRIBUTION. IF AUSTRIANS CONSIDER MERE INCREASE IN NUMBERS OF TRANSIENTS AS MAJOR POLITICAL PROBLEM, THEN THERE IS BOUND TO BE FRICTION. SINCE U.S. IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EXPECTED GREATER FLOW OF IMMIGRANTS, WE CAN HARDLY WASH OUR HANDS OF CONSEQUENT PROBLEMS OF MOVING THEM AS HUMANELY AND EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE TO FINAL DESTINATIONS. IN THIS INSTANCE, AT VERY LEAST, WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE AUSTRIANS TO RAISE THEIR MISIVINGS DIRECTLY WITH ISRAELIS ASAP.

9. WE ASSUME SUBJECT WILL BE DISCUSSED DURING KREISKY VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND NEED FOR ACTION, IF ANY, WILL BE CLARIFIED. KEATING

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